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BUILDING HOWICK HALL, NORTHUMBERLAND, 1779–87

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Howick Hall was designed by the architect William Newton of Newcastle upon Tyne (1730–98) for Sir Henry Grey, Bt., to replace a medieval tower-house. Newton made several designs for the new house, drawing upon recent work in north-east England by James Paine, before arriving at the final design in collaboration with his client. The new house incorporated plasterwork by Joseph Rose & Co. The earlier designs for the new house are published here for the first time, whilst the detailed accounts kept by Newton reveal the logistical, artisanal and domestic requirements of country house construction in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

Howick Hall, Northumberland, is a substantial mansion of the 1780s, the former home of the Charles, second Earl Grey (1764–1845), Prime Minister at the time of the 1832 Reform Act. (Fig. 1) The house replaced a medieval tower and was designed by the Newcastle architect William Newton (1730–98) for the Earl's bachelor uncle Sir Henry Grey (1733–1808), who took a keen interest in his nephew's education and emergence as a politician. It was built 1781 to 1788, remodelled on the north side to make a new entrance in 1809, but the interior was devastated in a fire in 1926. Sir Herbert Baker radically remodelled the surviving structure from



Fig. 1. Howick Hall, Northumberland, by William Newton, 1781–89.
South front and pavilions.



Fig. 2. Howick Hall. Extract from Plan of Howick Estate by D. Hastings 1759. (DULASC, GRE/X/276)

1928, before this was abandoned after the death of the fifth earl Grey in 1963. The fifth Earl's daughter, Lady Mary Cecil Grey, married Evelyn Baring in 1935, who became first Baron Howick of Glendale in 1960. Their son, Charles Evelyn Baring, second Baron Howick, converted the west wing of Newton's mansion into the present family home.¹ In view of these alterations and losses it is fortunate that a very detailed account of the building of the hall survives.² This, with contemporary estate surveys and the survival of unbuilt earlier plans for a new hall by Newton, show the development of Newton's designs and also the logistics, trade connections and costs of building a substantial country house on a fairly remote site, with data that would support further research on wage rates and building practices elsewhere in Georgian Britain.

THE GREYS OF HOWICK

Howick is a village in the north of Northumberland, thirty miles south of Berwick-upon-Tweed, forty miles north of Newcastle upon Tyne, and six miles north-east of the ducal seat of Alnwick Castle.

The principal residence is Howick Hall, which stands a mile inland from the North Sea. A tower owned by the Hering family was recorded at Howick in the royal surveys of border defences in 1415 and 1538.³ In 1597 the Herings sold their part of Howick to Sir Edward Grey. The name of Grey is synonymous with Border history, with several branches of the family inhabiting lands in the north of Northumberland since the thirteenth century and playing major roles in the wars between England and Scotland. In 1319 Thomas de Grey of Heton acquired part of the township of Howick, and with the acquisition of the Herings' lands and tower in 1597 they became the principal family in Howick.

Although the royal surveys mentioned a tower at Howick, there may have been other buildings attached or nearby, as has been established at other Northumbrian towers, including Chipchase Castle and Belsay Castle. Howick tower was illustrated on a survey of 1759, and in a painting from 1776.⁴ On the survey of 1759 (Fig. 2) the tower was shown as a rectangular block with two jambs projecting on the west side. This may have represented something more than a plain rectangular tower, as these jambs can also be seen at Belsay Castle, and the main entrance to that tower is set between these jambs for defensive reasons.⁵ The 1759 survey showed that a narrow range ran from the north side of Howick tower and connected with a rectangular building. To the north east of this group were the three ranges of the stables. A painting of 1776 by Thirlwell for the first duchess of Northumberland showed the south and east sides of the tower. (Fig. 3) Steps rose to a first floor doorway on the east side. Such first floor doorways have been noted in other north-east towers, including Cocklaw Tower, and may have been the initial entrances to Houghton Castle and Langley Castle.⁶ These doors provided important visitors with direct access to the chambers on the

first floor, bypassing the storage or services rooms on the ground floor. If the main entrance at Howick was between the jambs, as at Belsay Castle, this eastern door may have been a later addition. The narrow single windows to the south of this door shown in the painting suggest that the door communicated with a staircase inside the tower. Hutchinson, writing in 1776, recorded that the 'old tower noted by Leland still remains, being kept in good repair, and now forming a part of the mansion house'.⁷ The 1759 plan also showed the village of Howick on the southern side of the Howick Burn, with the chapel dedicated to St Michael. This was a classical-style building constructed in 1746 on the site of a medieval chapel (Fig. 4). It had arched windows and angle pilasters with Doric capitals, and may have resembled a classical temple in the landscape when viewed from the old hall. The architect is unknown. It was reconstructed again in Romanesque style by F. J. Francis in 1849.⁸

Sir Henry Grey, second baronet (1722-1808), replaced these earlier buildings with a modern residence. Described as 'of great family and fortune', he had served as an MP for Northumberland from 1754 to 1768, though it was noted that he was so



Fig. 3. Howick, 1776 by Thirlwell. Copy at Howick Hall by Mabel, fifth Countess Grey, of original at Alnwick Castle.

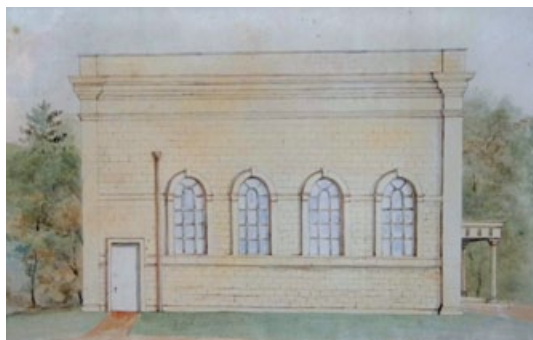


Fig. 4. The Classical-style Chapel of 1746.
Architect unknown. Painting by unknown artist
at Howick Hall.

often absent that the Parliamentary doorkeeper, ‘taking him for a stranger’, refused him entry.⁹ He succeeded to the estate at Howick in May 1759. He was unmarried and gave financial support to his nephew and ultimate heir, Charles (later second Earl Grey, 1764–1845). Charles was the son of Sir Henry’s third brother General Sir Charles Grey of Fallodon (1729–1807).¹⁰ With no children of his own, Sir Henry might have continued to reside in the ancient family seat, but instead he embarked upon its replacement with a modern mansion in the Palladian style. The new house was completed by 1791, when it was shown in plan on a survey of the estate. (Fig. 5)¹¹ The village of Howick had been removed by this time to a site to the east much closer to the North Sea coast. The rectangular pond of the Howick Burn and the fields shown in the 1759 plan had been replaced by more naturalistic stream and landscape in the style of ‘Capability’ Brown.

PATRON, PEERS AND ARCHITECTS

James Paine and other unnamed architects were consulted for designs by Sir Henry.¹² Paine had worked in Northumberland at Alnwick Castle (six miles south-west of Howick) c.1754–68 and at

Belford Hall (fifteen miles north-west of Howick) in 1754–56, before he chose to develop his practice in London and the Home Counties and gave up most of his work in England’s northern counties.¹³ Indeed, Sir Henry Grey subscribed to Paine’s *Plans, Elevations and Sections of Noblemen and Gentlemen’s Houses* of 1767, so may have consulted Paine after he inherited Howick in 1759.¹⁴ The new Howick Hall that arose after 1779 owed much to Paine’s influence, with the concept of a central house linked to pavilions on either side, as at Stockeld Park (Yorkshire) of 1758–63, Belford Hall, Northumberland (built 1754–56), and Gosforth Park, Newcastle (built 1755–64).¹⁵ The latter house was particularly significant, as one of the friends who advised Sir Henry Grey on the design of his new house was its owner, Charles Brandling.¹⁶

Paine focused on commissions in southern England after 1760, and the Newcastle builder-architect William Newton (1730–98) then attracted many commissions from merchants and gentlemen in Northumberland, Newcastle and Durham. Newton may have met Paine on at least two occasions. During the construction of Blagdon Hall (Northumberland) where Newton was working as a joiner and was the highest paid craftsmen, Paine was paid for some supervisory work.¹⁷ Paine and Newton both worked for the Bowes family of Gibside (Durham) in 1758–9, including sharing the services of the carver Christopher Richardson, who carved the figure of British Liberty atop the column at Gibside, where Paine had designed the new Chapel; Richardson also carved fireplaces for work supervised by Newton at the Bowes’s houses in Durham city.¹⁸ Newton also succeeded Paine in the refurbishment of Wallington Hall (Northumberland) for Sir Walter Blackett after 1760, and may have done so at Bradley Hall, near Ryton, County Durham.¹⁹ John Carr of York picked up commissions in south Durham, Yorkshire and the northern Midlands from clients who might earlier have dealt with Paine.²⁰ Newton’s early designs as an architect, including drawings for buildings at



Fig. 5. Extract from Plan of Howick Estate, 1791. (DULASC, GB-0033-GRE/X/P276)

Wallington and a townhouse in Alnwick attributed to him, show his awareness of Paine's style, with the use of alternating segmental and triangular pediments and projecting three bay centrepieces with heavy central pediments.²¹

From the age of 14 in 1744, William Newton worked as a carpenter alongside his father Robert Newton, initially as one of a group of craftsmen who executed the designs of Daniel Garrett in north-east England, including Fenham Hall, Nunwick Hall, the Newcastle Infirmary and Blagdon Hall, as well

as independent designs for remodelling Capheaton Hall (Northumberland) and building alterations for the Bowes family and Newcastle Corporation.²² By the early 1760s he had established himself as the leading builder-architect based in Newcastle upon Tyne, with a strong patronage network including the Corporation of Newcastle and many gentlemen, merchants and professionals turning profits from the burgeoning industries and trade of Tyneside, particularly coal, into mansions around the principal towns of Newcastle, Durham and Alnwick.²³ The

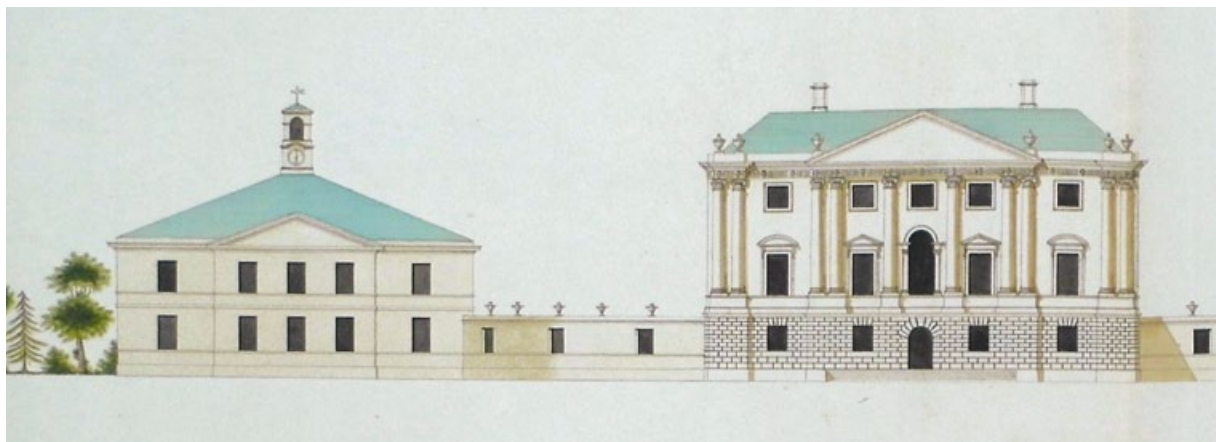
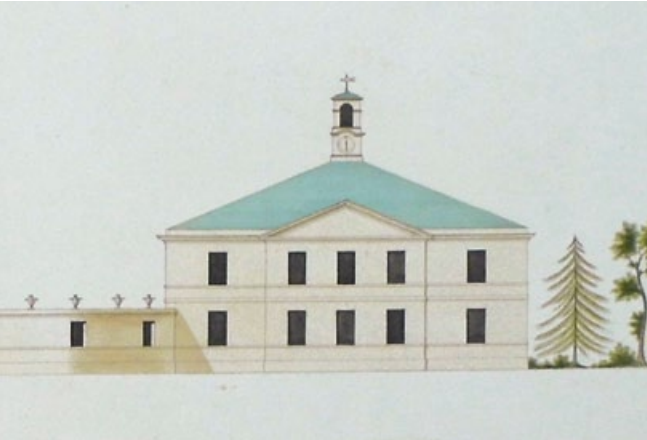


Fig. 6. South elevation of unbuilt plans for Howick Hall by William Newton.

defeat of the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745 removed the final fears of Scottish invasion and provided a further impetus for county families to remodel or replace the defensible towers of previous centuries. In 1776, the new Assembly Rooms opened in Newcastle, designed by Newton and with many of the region's leading inhabitants among the subscribers and participants in the entertainments. The Assembly Rooms were a stunning demonstration of Newton's abilities as an architect and led to many commissions for private houses, including the new Howick Hall for Sir Henry Grey, who was one of the subscribers.²⁴

Newton's first recorded visit to Howick was on 18 July 1779, when he claimed £4 4s for 'taking dimensions of the new Hall at Howick'. On 17 September he claimed £10 10s for 'making a plan of the new hall with an addition of a dining rooms, hall, drawing room with an estimate' and on 25 October he made 'a general plan of the principal story chamber, attick storey and office with south east and west front' for £21. Sir Henry may have sought alternative plans and a second opinion on Newton's designs, for on 18 September 1780 Newton returned to Howick to make 'a general plan of the house with south east and west fronts by the directions of Sir

Francis Blake, Bt. and Charles Brandling', for which he was paid another £21.²⁵ Brandling (1733–1802) was a Newcastle coal-owner and MP who had confirmed his rising social position with a new house by Paine.²⁶ He was Sheriff of Northumberland in 1781, but had a personal connection to Howick as his grandmother was Margaret (1667–1764), daughter of John Grey of Howick.²⁷ Blake (1737–1818), the second baronet, had succeeded his father, also Sir Francis Blake, in March 1780, inheriting substantial estates in north Northumberland including Tillmouth, Fowberry Tower, and Twizel Castle; he continued his father's costly rebuilding of Twizel Castle that lasted forty years without being finished.²⁸ Their involvement demonstrated the powerful influence of fellow landowners on prospective builders and upon provincial architects dependent upon local patronage to secure commissions. Blake's amateur architectural forays at his three estates were in the castellated style, but Sir Henry Grey preferred the classical idiom of Brandling's Gosforth Park. The executed design also bore similarities to the Newton's own recently-completed Newcastle Assembly Rooms (1774–6), to which both Brandling and Grey were subscribers. (Fig. 10)



THE EARLY DESIGN

Newton's second visit may have resulted in the folio of plans still at Howick Hall, showing larger pavilions and a smaller main house than that finally constructed. The design contained many of the features of the house as constructed, including the three-bay centre on the south defined by Ionic columns supporting a pediment, but the main house was five rather than nine bays wide. (Fig. 6) It was to be 90 ft wide from east to west and 75 ft deep from north to south, with a rusticated ground floor and a round-headed doorway in the centre. The *piano nobile* was indicated by taller windows with alternating segmental and triangular pediments, and a tall round-headed central window. This design appeared more squat than the final one, perhaps because of the deep frieze below the pediment and eaves, but also because so much was crammed into a five-bay façade. The double columns at the edges, the rusticated ground floor with arched door and the first floor arched window appeared in Newton's design for the Newcastle Assembly Rooms, but there he had lowered the side bays to two storeys and had omitted the end columns. The proposed floor-plans for Howick also had much in common with Paine's designs for Gosforth Park, being five by five bays in proportions, with a columned ground

floor entrance hall on the south leading to the main staircase up to the first floor.²⁹ (Fig. 7) A secondary staircase was positioned between the rear wall of the main staircase and the southern wall of the northern vestibule. The rooms on either side were almost identical in form and proportion to those at Gosforth.

On the first floor, the similarities with Gosforth Park continued, with a rectangular room and a square room on either side of the staircases. (Fig. 8) Newton rationalised the positions of fireplaces, omitted the skewed entrances to the northern rooms and some of niches for sculpture, and replaced the oval room in the centre of the north side with an additional service staircase. The dimensions of the rooms revealed the debt to Paine's Gosforth design: the central salon was 30ft × 20ft at Gosforth and 31ft × 20ft at Howick, the drawing room was 36ft × 24ft in both designs, the dining room was 36ft × 24ft and the largest bedroom on this floor in both designs was 26ft × 24ft. The second floor at Gosforth Park was reached from the secondary staircase, with a large rectangular skylight in the roof above. Newton's second floor of the Howick design was reached from the staircase in an identical position, and his disposition of bedrooms copied those at Gosforth. But in a note of individuality, the centre of Newton's house was lit by a glass dome.

The surviving plans for Howick were a throwback to Paine's designs of the 1750s for Cusworth Hall, Gosforth Park, Belford Hall and Heath Hall. It is difficult to see the initial plans as later than Newton's work at the Newcastle Assembly Rooms, and it is possible that they were have been commissioned as early as the 1760s, when Newton's work was more closely aligned with that of Paine; it is likely, however, that the influence of Sir Charles Brandling was the crucial factor in selecting them. But once again Sir Henry Grey hesitated, and Newton was recalled on 10 April 1781 to make new plans 'by order of Sir Henry Grey, Bt'.³⁰ These were the last payments for designs for the new hall, and were probably the designs used for the new building,

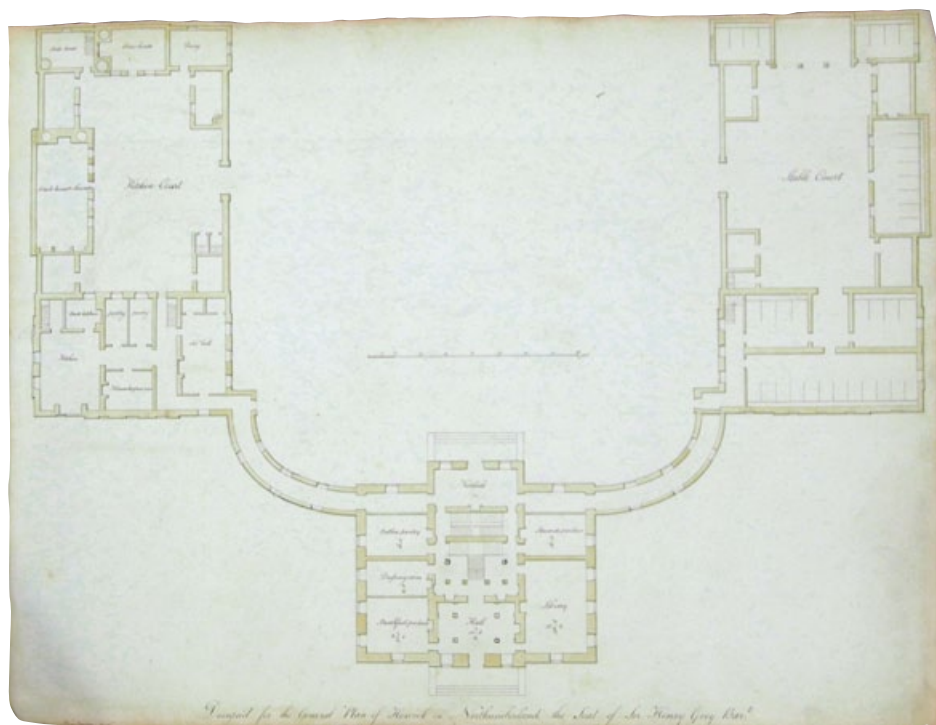


Fig. 7. Ground floor of unbuilt plans for Howick Hall by William Newton.

which have since disappeared. There was also a payment for twenty tons of blue slates at £4 10s a ton, totalling £84, indicating that building was about to begin and materials were on order.

THE FINAL DESIGN

Newton's final designs for Howick Hall continued the Palladian 'villa with wings' form of the previous designs and of Paine's country houses in north-east England.³¹ The pavilions were modified to have pitched rather than pyramidal roofs and the house expanded to nine bays in width. Although Newton had learnt from Paine's designs, as a young man he worked on buildings designed by Daniel Garrett including Fenham Hall (Newcastle). Garrett in turn was influenced by the buildings

of Palladio, as interpreted by Lord Burlington. The southern centrepiece at Howick was derived from the engraving of Palladio's *Villa Capra* in the *Quattro Libri* (Fig. 9), used by Paine at Bywell Hall; for Newton and Sir Henry Grey this design may have seemed particularly appropriate, since in the accompanying text Palladio wrote that 'certainly this gentleman will have a very stately and magnificent house, suitable to his noble mind.'³² Palladio inspired several of Newton's own designs, including his most important commission, the new Assembly Rooms in Newcastle. Lord Burlington had turned to Palladio for an ancient model for the York Assembly Rooms completed in 1732, and Newton sought similar authority for the Newcastle rooms and for the new façade of the Guildhall built for Newcastle Corporation in 1794. (Fig. 10) The *Villa Capra* remained a popular source throughout the

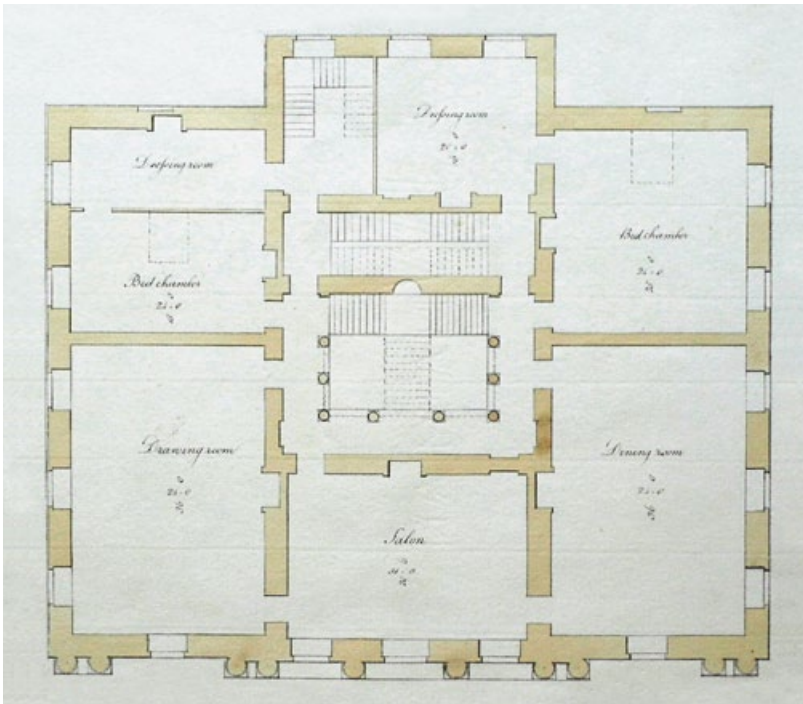
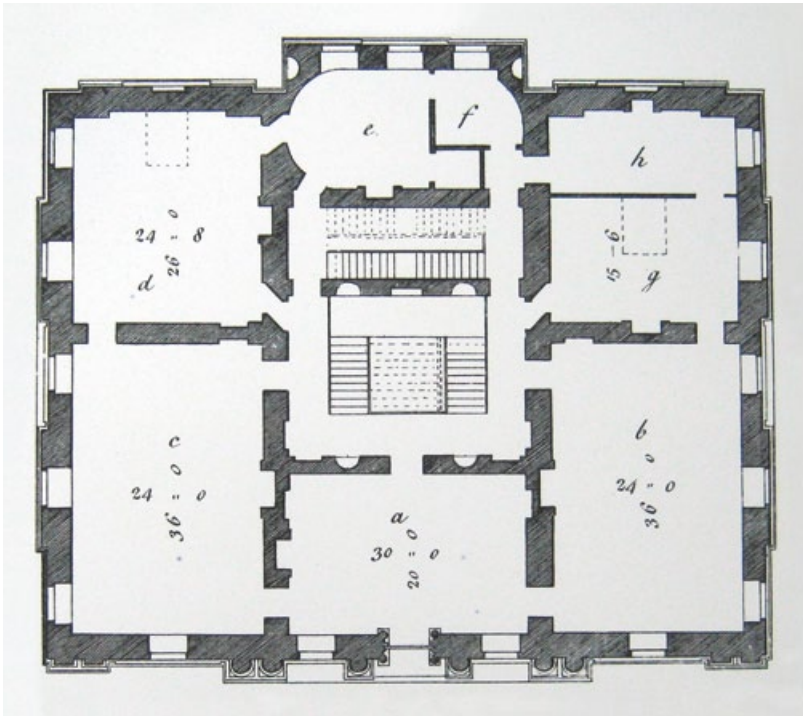


Fig. 8. Comparison of the first floor of Gosforth Park (Paine, *Plans*, Plate 17) and the first floor of unbuild plans for Howick Hall by William Newton.

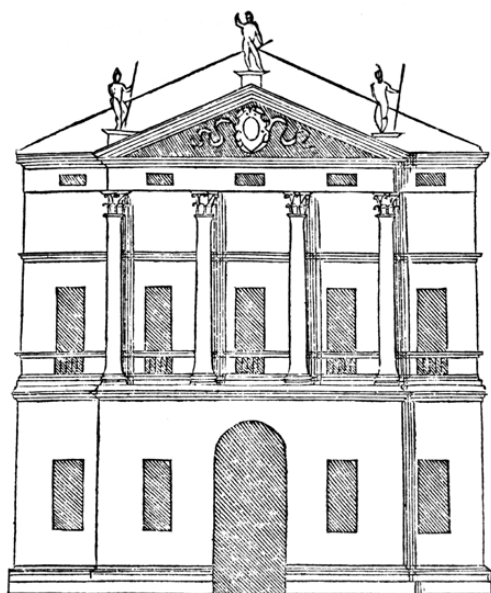


Fig. 9. Comparison of south elevation of Howick Hall and Palladio's design for the Villa Capra.
(*Quattro Libri*, Book 2, p. 21)

eighteenth century; Joseph Pickford incorporated it in the façade of St Helen's House in Derby (1768), and Robert Adam had adapted the same model, albeit with Neo-classical features at Lansdowne House in Berkeley Square, London, in 1767.³³

Newton's final design for Howick Hall was a much closer rendering of the Palladian original than the Newcastle Assembly Rooms or any of Paine's works. He omitted the paired columns at the sides of the central temple-front that he had incorporated in the Newcastle Assembly Rooms, and which Paine had also used, and he also omitted the tall door-like round-headed window on the first floor. The ground-floor windows have oversized keystones, but these are flush with the wall surface, and the sash windows are the same size as those on the first floor, indicating that the principal rooms are on the ground and first floors, rather than in a *piano nobile* above a basement. Above the rusticated ground floor Newton used smooth regular ashlar blocks, with only a thin sill band joining the bases of the first floor

windows. Ornament was applied sparingly, with only the central window of each three bay section on the first floor given a pediment. On the second floor, the windows are square, set in raised architraves and half the height of those on the lower floors.

In common with Newton's designs for the Assembly Rooms and Guildhall in Newcastle, the columns of the centrepiece are unfluted, with Ionic capitals, rather than the Corinthian capitals seen in Palladio's design. A plain moulded cornice tops the elevation, and the only other decoration is the Grey coat of arms in the tympanum of the pediment. The west and east elevations were also relatively plain, with one pediment over the central first floor window, as was Newton's north elevation before the major alterations of 1928.³⁴ The east and west pavilions were constructed with five bay elevations on each side, with the three central bays projecting slightly and capped by pediments. (Fig. 1) On the southern elevations the ground floors of the pavilions were given triple-arched recesses, a form

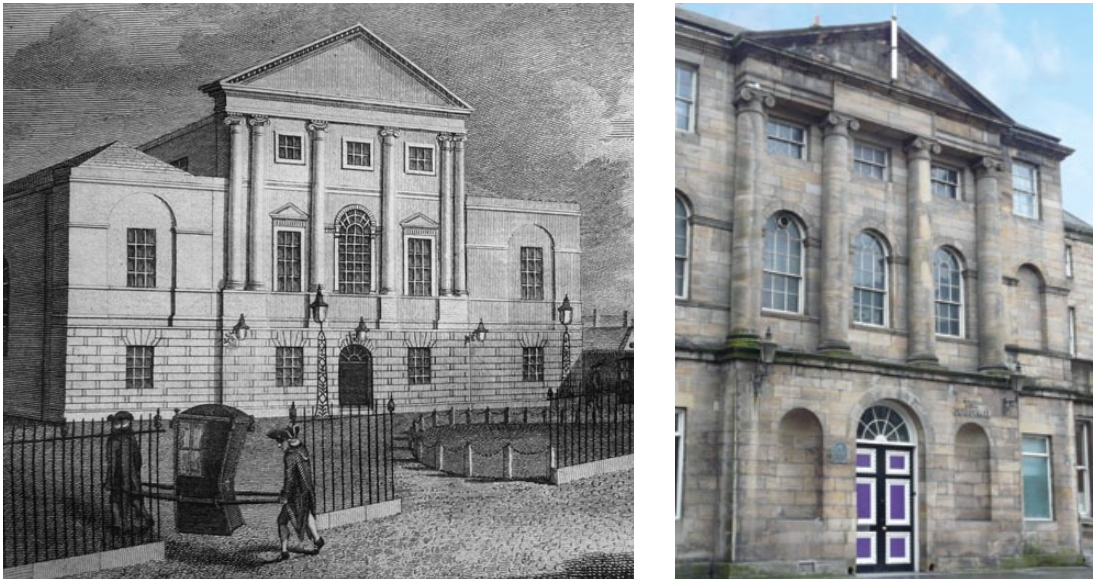


Fig. 10. Comparison of The Old Assembly Rooms, Newcastle, by William Newton 1774-1776 (from John Brand, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, 1789) and north elevation of Newcastle Guildhall (1794 by William Newton and David Stephenson).

of decoration recalling Garrett's southern elevation of Fenham Hall, the first recorded building where Newton worked, and which may have been derived from the engravings of Palladio's Villa Saraceno in the *Quattro Libri*. Each pavilion had a tall clock tower rising from its centre, topped by a cupola. A service courtyard extended northwards behind each pavilion; they were connected to the main house by curving corridors, rebuilt by George Wyatt in 1809 as more substantial quadrants with Doric pilasters.

BUILDERS AND MATERIALS

Work began on Monday 4 June 1781, and on 16th December 1781 the first payment was recorded in Newton's Expenses to 'masons at the new building £171 19s'. They were paid between 20d and 14d per day, with the standard working week of six days. William Gibson may have been the principal mason, as he was paid at 20d per day from the first

week of work in June 1781 through to 26 April 1788. He worked 1,242 days and was paid £103 10s and 10d. Other masons who were paid between 20d per day and 14d per day.³⁵ These different rates may indicate that some of the men were completing apprenticeships, or that the higher paid masons were capable of more refined work such as window decorations rather than the regular blocks required for the walls. There were several examples of possible relatives working on site: Wm. and Hen. Batty, and Wm. Thompson, J. Thompson and R. Thompson, who may have been brothers or otherwise related. All of these men were not employed throughout the building work: R. Thompson was not recorded after December 1784, whilst J. Thompson was first recorded in March 1786 and Wm. Thompson began in September 1786. At times other senior masons could be called upon, for example J. Dods, who was paid 20d per day for 24 days work in May and June 1786. The masons required the services of Aubone Robinson, a smith employed to sharpen their tools

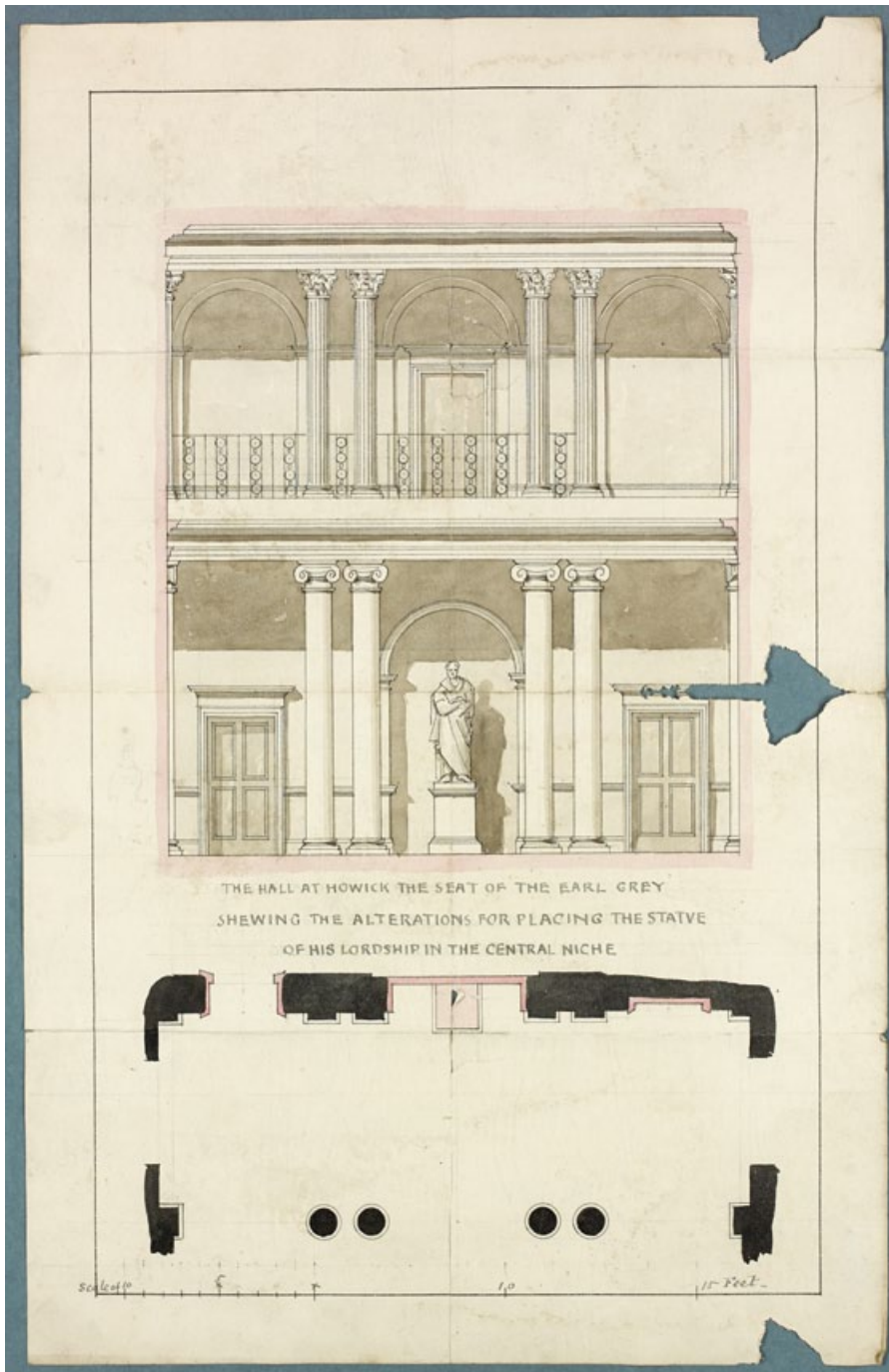


Fig. 11. Plan and elevation of the hall at Howick, probably by John Green, 1838, showing alterations for placing the statue of Earl Grey in the central niche. (DULASC, GRE/X/P181)

throughout the construction of the house. He was paid varying amounts every two months. Alongside the masons were labourers, paid 12d. per day or 14d per day.³⁶

The outer skin of the new hall was of golden sandstone, but the internal walls were of brick. On 21 December 1782 John Richardson was paid £139 5sh for 'levelling the brick ground' and for making 557,000 bricks at 5s per 1000 bricks, with a further payment a year later of £60 1s for another 231,000 bricks. These bricks were laid in position by the bricklayers Jas. Bowmaker, J. Fowler, Jam. Purvis, Tho. Clark, Wm. Boyd, and Jno. Edwards, each paid 2s per day. As might be expected, the number of workmen employed varied between the main summer building season and the autumn and winter when it was difficult to work outside or transport materials to site. The essential group of craftsmen missing from the Expenses are the names of carpenters and joiners. However, Newton was a carpenter by trade and these craftsmen may have been Newton's employees, for he claimed for the detailed timberwork required in the construction, for example the £160 he claimed in December 1773 'for scaffolding to all the building, deals, ropes, nails and pulley and carpenters attending the scaffolds' and a further payment of £378 on the same day for '108 squares of carpenter work and materials in the roof'.

It is also clear that Newton had access to much of the materials required for the new house from his base in Newcastle, and that he had these shipped to Alnmouth, an important corn port six miles south of Howick, from whence the materials were transported by road to the site. On 4 June 1782, eight tons of alabaster at £2 per ton, 25 tons of blue slates (costing £112) and scaffolding were sent from Newcastle, requiring a payment of £16 3s for freight. The alabaster was used for plastering,³⁷ in conjunction with the 184 stone of hair costing 18s, delivered on 20 January 1784, and the 380,000 lath nails (costing £25) delivered from Newcastle on 4 March 1784. On 28 August that year Newton claimed £45 for

2,700 ft of plastering laths, £4 3s for 100,000 nails, and for the freight costs of bringing slates, doors, window shutters and architraves from Newcastle to Alnmouth. The reference to the window shutters indicates that Newton could have these batch-made in Newcastle rather than on site. The slates, timber and deals, doors, glass and window shutters, hair, alabaster, lead, and 380,000 lath nails were shipped from Newcastle (where Newton could arrange its purchase and transportation) up the coast to Alnmouth, and then carried on wagons to the building site. By August 1784, the exterior of the south front must have been complete, for Mr Lucas was paid £30 13s for 'carving the arms in the pediment'. This was confirmed by a letter of 9 June 1784 which noted that Sir Henry Grey 'has built a very good house at Howick and it is covered in and his coat of arms is ready to do in stone as soon as they may please'.³⁸

The interior of Howick Hall was largely destroyed in the fire of 1926 and Sir Herbert Baker's alterations after 1928 changed the internal plan, but Newton's expenses, together with comparison with his surviving buildings and records of later architects' alterations, provide some details of the decoration. Within the hall, expensive fittings including fireplaces were installed from August 1785, when a 'jasper chimney piece with statuary slab moulding and ornament to music room' was fitted for £30. In November that year Newton charged £71 15s for 957 ft of columns and pilasters to the main staircase. Although destroyed in the fire of 1926, an illustration of c.1838 (Fig. 11), probably by the architect John Green of Newcastle, showed that the staircase hall was accessed from the entrance hall through a central arched opening on the ground floor, which Green proposed to block in order to accommodate a statue of the second Earl Grey and to install a door and false door to replace the arch. Newton used this central arch from the entrance hall at other houses in Northumberland including Dissington Hall, Hesleyside Hall and Acton House

(attributed), a dramatic device that framed the staircase for the viewer. The columns and pilasters of the Howick staircase screen and landing were similar to those at these houses. The lower screen at Howick was composed of Ionic columns and that on the first floor had fluted Corinthian columns.³⁹ The main staircase had balusters and a mahogany rail costing £46 when paid for in December 1787.⁴⁰ Its form may have been similar to that shown in the earlier designs (rather than the ‘imperial’ form employed at Dissington, Hesleyside and Acton), with a single flight from ground to a mezzanine landing, then rising in two flights to join the first floor balcony on the west and east sides. In a letter of 1826 proposing alterations to this staircase, the architect Ignatius Bonomi (1787–1870) stated that there were eight steps below the landing and eight in the side flights above it.⁴¹ On 15 September 1786, 480 black marble dots were bought for the pavement of the hall and staircase, to be inserted at the joints of the stone flags for decoration. There were also backstairs, which had iron balusters costing £44 in August 1785.

The principal storey and music room had mahogany doors costing £155, possibly made from the mahogany shipped from Newcastle to Alnmouth on 28 August 1784; the corridors, footmen’s lobby, butlers’ rooms, powdering room and cellars had six panel doors.⁴² Later, in December 1784 Newton claimed £14 for ‘carpenters 140 days making moulds for masons and plasterers’. Several types of plasterwork were specified for friezes and cornices, including palms, water leaf, ‘3700 feet of half inch ogees ovolos and fluting at 4 1/2d’ and ‘plain leaf and tong at 9d to bases of hall drawing room dining room and staircase’.⁴³ On 4 March 1784 Newton was paid £50 for ‘Making the designs for the ceiling of the hall dining room, drawing room and staircase and sections of the dining room, staircase, mouldings to all rooms’. Some at least of the plasterwork was by Joseph Rose and Co., the finest plasterers in the country at this time, showing that Sir Henry Grey was able to commission interior work of the highest

quality to Newton’s designs; ‘Mr Rose’ was paid £193 in May 1786 for the ‘ornament in the ceiling of the hall dining and drawing rooms’.⁴⁴ One jasper and one sienna fireplace were supplied for the parlour and library in February 1787 for £56. In 1788 Charles Rochester was paid £211, £9 and £54 for plastering, and the painters John Bell and Thomas Allison received £47 14s and £45 respectively in July 1788 as the new house neared completion. Landell and Chambers (who supplied metal goods to several other houses by Newton) and Luke Mallinson supplied locks and hinges.

The pavilions containing the kitchen and stables were built from 1785 to 1787. On 20 November 1785 ‘32 squares of framed floors to Great Stables with girders and bridging joists work and material at £2 -- £64’; in December 1786 Newton claimed for ‘300 feet of dial plates 2” thick and weather boarding to the cupolas -- £15’; in July 1787 £286 was claimed for ‘19 squares of roof to the coach house stable at £1 10s each’, ‘980 feet of sashes to great stables and kitchen wings at 14d – £57 3s 4d’ and in December 1787 ‘2700 feet of racks, mangers, stalls in great stable of oak -- £112 10s’ and £4 17s for ‘388 feet of skirting board and boards in great stables’.

BUILDING COSTS

One of the attractions for patrons to employ a provincial architect such as Newton, John Carr or Joseph Pickford of Derby was the higher level of personal attention to the progress of building that they could give. Howard Colvin suggested that it was accepted that an architect would visit a site ‘at least once a year’, so for much of the year the architect was not on hand to supervise the quality of building and resolve any problems that might occur.⁴⁵ Newton travelled to Howick Hall, forty miles north of Newcastle, one hundred times in nine years: once in 1779, six times in 1780, twenty journeys per year in 1781 and 1782, twenty four visits in 1783, twenty

Year	Expenditure on building work
1779-81	£476
1781	£394
1782	£1,690
1783	£1,600
1784	£1,350
1785	£1,740
1786	£1,340
1787	£1,200
1788	£1,523
TOTAL	£11,313

Table 1: Annual expenditure in building Howick Hall, Northumberland. Source: DULASC, GB-0033/GRE/X/P193, William Newton's Book of Expenses for New House at Howick

two journeys in 1784, nineteen in 1785, sixteen visits in 1786 and 1787, and eight journeys in 1788. This level of supervision, of up to two visits per month, ensured that Newton was aware of progress and could provide frequent guidance to craftsmen and reassurance to the client that their money was being spent wisely. It was an essential concern for clients, who wanted to ensure that their investment was well managed.

The scale of the investment required of Sir Henry Grey was recorded in Newton's Expenses, summarised in Table 1:

Howick Hall has a main block of nine by five bays, three storeys high, linked to two-storey pavilions five by five bays. For comparison, the cost of the very similar Denton Park, near Harrogate in North Yorkshire, constructed to the designs of John Carr from 1772 to 1778, was £9,459. This is a nine-by seven-bay main block of two storeys, linked to pavilions of three by four bays on each

side. Sir James Ibbetson of Denton had married Jenny Caygill, an heiress with a £5000 fortune, had inherited considerable property in Leeds from his father, and could draw upon the Denton Park estates' income of £1,100 per year and his wife's property worth £1,250 per year.⁴⁶ In more remote areas of the country, it was possible for the client to hold down building costs. Salle Park, in Norfolk, for instance, was built in 1763 for £2,470. It is a brick house of three storeys and seven bays, of a design similar to the south front of Blagdon Hall in Northumberland. A similar house in North Yorkshire, Ormesby Hall, cost around £3,480 in 1750.⁴⁷ All of these works were dwarfed by the estimated £70,000 to £80,000 spent by the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland on their restoration of Alnwick Castle after 1755, but even their landed income was supplemented by substantial income from coal mining.⁴⁸

SUBSEQUENT ALTERATIONS

Before his death in 1808 Sir Henry transferred ownership of Howick Hall to his brother Sir Charles, who in 1801 was created Baron Grey of Howick and in 1806 became the first Earl Grey.⁴⁹ Sir Charles died in November 1807, and Sir Henry in 1808, so that his nephew Charles Grey (1764-1845) inherited both Howick Hall and his father's estate of Falldon, becoming the second Earl Grey. He had been living at Howick since 1801 and had used the title Viscount Howick from May 1806.⁵⁰ He instituted changes to Howick Hall, beginning with the entrance arrangements. Newton's house faced south and was reached by a drive that ran past the church, across the bridge and then turned towards the south door, but Viscount Grey, as he then was, decided to change the entrance arrangements so that carriages came to the north side of the house, leaving the south side free to be developed as gardens and to give more privacy to the principal rooms on that side. In April 1806 the architect David Stephenson wrote to him at

the Admiralty in London with designs for a circular portico on the north front to form a new entrance. He suggested that if the 'portico or porch is shut out from the vestibule by a fanciful screen between the arches and the screen filled with plate glass, the entrance may be more effectively guarded against the north wind'.⁵¹ Stephenson also sent a model of the north front by wagon from Newcastle to Howick to illustrate his proposal, noting his dissatisfaction with previous models and stating that this one had been made in 'my office so that it might be constantly under my eye'. Evidently, the proposal to remodel the north front would have restricted the light to the main staircase, so Stephenson proposed that a skylight be introduced into the roof. The new portico was to have Doric columns, though the earl could 'employ a higher order, or could make the Doric appear lighter by fluting the columns'.

The death of the first earl in 1807 and of Sir Henry in 1808 may have thwarted these plans, and it is unclear if any of Stephenson's proposals were carried out. But in May 1808, a month after Sir Henry's death, the architect George Wyatt provided designs for a new northern entrance to the house.⁵² This involved building out from Newton's north wall to create a single-storeyed extension across the whole of the north side of the main block, described

as a conservatory in Wyatt's letter of 21 May 1808.⁵³ Wyatt wrote again on 25 May to suggest that instead of the Ionic columns in the library favoured by the earl, Doric columns would be more pleasing, and if fluted and properly ornamented the capitals would have an effect 'quite as rich and as handsome as Ionic'.⁵⁴ The foundations of the new conservatory were begun on 7 June 1808.⁵⁵ Wyatt also remodelled the corridors connecting the main block to the pavilions, converting them into more substantial quadrants that curved on the south side as in Newton's design, but with straight north sides so that they continued the line of the single storey extension on the north from one pavilion to the other. The north and south elevations of these quadrants had Doric pilasters, confirming that these were built by Wyatt not Newton. Wyatt also designed the garden terraces on the south side of the house, which replaced the original entrance drive.⁵⁶

Later nineteenth-century alterations were more limited. It is not clear whether Bonomi's proposals for the main staircase were executed, or if John Green's plan for blocking the arch into the staircase hall was carried out, for the whole of this area was destroyed in 1926. Baker removed Newton's three bay centre of the north elevation and turned the area of the staircase hall into a glass-domed rotunda on



Fig. 12. North side of Howick Hall, with single storey extension by George Wyatt (1809) and Sir Herbert Baker's remodelling of central block after 1926 fire.

the ground floor with an open courtyard above and the gap in the elevation filled with an open screen supported by two giant Tuscan columns, perhaps recalling the principal elevation of Belsay Hall, Northumberland, of 1810–17 with its Doric columns. Baker also added the arched and circular windows that flank the screen on the first and second floors, and remodelled the interior of Wyatt's northern portico (Fig. 12). With no main staircase remaining, Baker inserted stairs in the north-west and north-east corners and redecorated the interiors of the rooms with Baroque and Neo-classical ceilings.

Although much of the Georgian interior of Howick Hall has been lost through fire and alterations, it has been possible to learn much of the process of designing and building a sizeable country house in the eighteenth century through the detailed archival sources that remain. The southern elevation of Howick Hall remains much as Newton and Sir Henry Grey intended, presiding majestically over the landscaped gardens around the Howick Burn, its carefully cut stone forming a golden backdrop to the rich flora below.

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- 36 The labourers Ja. Brodie and Geo. Brodie, Jas. Young, Jas. Waddell, Wm. Potter, Robt. Wood, J. Cunningham, J. Richardson and R. Fairbairn were paid 12d per day. Those paid 14d per day were Wm. Curry, Tho. Ferguson, J. Duncan, R. Herbert, Ditchman, Davison, Hunter, Blyth, Wood, and Graham.
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